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into a permanent colonization of Vinland. The skeleton in armor, most surprising of all, now turns out, on the authority of Mr. Longfellow's poem, to have been that of Thorwald, who was killed and buried on the shores of Massachusetts Bay, if anywhere in New England. These questions have been examined at length in a previous number of this Review,* and there is no need to enter again into the discussion. But whether these relics are Norse or Indian, whether these were permanent settlements or not, it is in utter contempt of all historical method to state facts as a basis for argument, without the slightest proof of their truth. The book closes with an Appendix, described as being on "the historical, linguistic, literary, and scientific value of the Scandinavian languages." Instead of a philological essay, this Appendix is modelled on the advertisements of books, which are composed of favorable fragments of notices from different periodicals. It is composed of laudatory remarks on the Scandinavian languages by authorities of different value, living and dead. It appears so objectless to advertise the Norse language after this fashion, that the reader is driven to one of two conclusions, — that the whole book is an advertisement of Mr. Anderson, or of the proposed monument to Leif Erikson.

6. — *Ultimo*. Novelle von FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN. Verlag von L. STAACKMANN. Leipzig, 1874. Boston: Schoenhof and Moeller.

THERE never was a time when Germany displayed a greater political activity than at the present day; but her literature, somehow, does not appear to keep pace with her political progress. We should be far from wishing back the times when a comparatively insignificant novel like Schlegel's "Lucinde" or Gutzkow's *Ritter vom Geist* created more discussion in the *salons* of Weimar and Berlin than a national victory; and the publication of a new drama was deemed an event of historic importance. In modern society literature can no more be the one absorbing topic of interest. This last decade of warfare and strife has roused the German *bourgeoisie* to a more vivid consciousness of its own worth and responsibility, and the citizens of the Fatherland now feel themselves a part of the state in a far deeper and truer sense than did those picturesque idlers who once gathered around the court of Karl August, and in the æsthetic circle of Rachel von Varnhagen discussed with such charming *nonchalance*

* North American Review for July, 1874.

the weightiest problems of humanity. Moreover, the government displays a laudable zeal for the education of the masses, and, as the statistics of Prussia prove, the general enlightenment is there greater than in any other country except — Iceland. Thus, as the nation grows in intellectual stature, it becomes gradually more difficult to loom up above the crowd, and it requires an extraordinary strength of lungs to make one's voice heard above the noisy din and bustle of the day. Even the placid grandeur of a genius like Goethe's (if, indeed, such a figure could be imagined in an age like ours) the world of to-day would be slower to recognize, while, probably, an impassioned rhapsodist like Schiller would more readily reach the ear of the multitude; and we are hardly far from the truth in saying that even men as supremely gifted as they would now be reduced from their position of intellectual autocrats to that of honored co-workers with a hundred others whose mental labors and achievements contribute to the advancement of human civilization. If "The Sorrows of Werther" had appeared in the year 1874, it would, no doubt, have set a hundred pens scribbling, but it would hardly have induced anybody to commit suicide; "The Robbers" might have received careful reviews in the *Gartenlaube* and the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, but we are slow to believe that it would have created a passion for highway robbery.

Among the living German novelists there are but three or four whose fame extends beyond the boundary of their own country, and even these are outranked by at least a dozen greater celebrities of other nations. It is the direct consequence of the above-mentioned changes in the social and political life that they should all have more or less strongly pronounced moral and political tendencies. To be sure, Auerbach's philosophy is so vague and his literary proclivities so changeable, that it is next to impossible to define his exact position. But Freytag and Spielhagen have shown their true colors, and (if we date the career of the former from the publication of "Debit and Credit") consistently adhered to them until this day. Both deal boldly with the great problems of the century, each regarding them from his own point of view. Freytag admits that something is wrong in the modern arrangement of society, and he points to various reminiscences of mediæval civilization which, in his opinion, are responsible for much injustice and abuse; but he is by nature a conservative, and loves gentle remedies. Spielhagen is fiercely democratic, a thorough radical, loves barricades, and preaches revolution. Freytag is in no haste to tear down before he has found something better to substitute what has been demolished; he has a firm faith

in the health and strength of his people, and seems to think that time will be sure to set everything aright. Spielhagen, while at heart no less thoroughly a German, scorns the gentle policy of peace and endurance; he prefers the shorter road to victory, and with warlike zeal he rushes onward, striking right and left, until at length revolution is inevitable. The patient gospel of Christianity is accordingly to him nothing but a means in the hands of the despot to keep the nations in eternal bondage and subjection.

The present novel, *Ultimo*, differs in no respect, except in bulk and in degree of excellence, from the previous socialistic manifestos of the same author. In fact, there is hardly a single character which has not its prototype in some hero or heroine of his former works. Conrad Wild, the principal actor, is almost an exact repetition of Oswald Stein in *Problematische Naturen*, and Leo Gutmann in *In Reih' und Glied*. He is, like all Spielhagen's heroes, a problematic character, a political malcontent, and a religious sceptic. Like his illustrious predecessors, he also shares the unenviable gift of Wilhelm Meister and Don Giovanni to bring every woman with whom he comes in contact to his feet. We are informed that he has been a prominent man in the revolution of 1848, and that his youthful enthusiasm for the welfare of humanity has been rewarded with persecution and imprisonment. Now misfortune has imbittered him, he has wellnigh lost his faith in human nature, and seeks consolation for his disappointment in an unflagging devotion to his medical profession. He breaks his engagement with Christiane Kempe, a young girl of humble origin, who, in spite of his neglect, still loves him ardently, and tries in vain to repair his broken fortunes by a projected marriage with Melanie Goldheimer, the daughter of a wealthy Jewish banker. In this Melanie we have again a pale and colorless reproduction of Emma von Sonnenstein in *In Reih' und Glied*, and in the whole Goldheimer family an inferior miniature copy of the interesting household of the Sonnensteins.

We have frequently noticed a certain touch of the melodramatic in Spielhagen's previous writings, and it did not therefore surprise us to find this tendency rather abnormally developed in the present novel. For when an author condescends to reproduce himself, it is invariably his faults which, being, as it were, of a grosser substance, are most easily caught, while the freshness and fleeting flavor which fascinated the public as long as his literary individuality was new are not so easily retained. Oswald Stein and Leo Gutmann we accepted, not because they were positively new types of character, but because the author's treatment of the old type invested it with

a fresh amount of vitality, and thereby gave it a new lease of life. But in Conrad Wild we find not a single characteristic which we have not seen, at least, twenty times before. He is arrogant and fickle like Oswald, without possessing his amiable mobility of nature, and cool and scheming like Leo, without having so lofty an ambition to palliate his breaches of faith and honor. He accepts temporarily Christiane's legacy, then throws her away when he has no more use for her; his clear eyes do not fail to detect the numerous foibles and affectations of Melanie, but the position and wealth of her family will serve him as a ladder to social distinction and, perhaps, usefulness; and without serious scruples he swears her a love which he does not feel, and a faith which is no longer intact. When prayers do not avail him with her father, he resorts to threats, making a very undignified use of his accidental knowledge of a certain relation, the secrecy of which Goldheimer wishes at all risks to preserve. When, however, his consent has been wrung from him, the hero discovers, in the last moment, that Melanie has been as insincere as himself; filled with righteous indignation, he "hurls her away," hastens to his home, and after some more vain attempts to obtain a certain amount of money, needed to meet his obligations, determines to kill himself with prussic acid. We cannot forbear to quote the passage describing his preparation for death:—

"Wild stood still motionless on the same spot. How was it to be done? On the way he had been meditating whether it could not be managed so as to have the appearance of a natural death; paralysis, for instance, or a disease of the heart, which suddenly puts an end to his life while he is sitting in the sofa-corner leisurely smoking a cigar, after the exertions of the day, or reclining at the window in the last light of the evening, turning over the leaves of a journal, as the ladies in the house opposite, surely, often must have seen him do."

In this strain he continues his reflections while preparing the deadly draught; then tender memories of Christiane return to him, he takes out her old letters and begins to read them. Their effect upon him, however, which may be easily imagined, is not sufficiently strong to shake his resolution. He is just in the act of putting the phial of poison to his lips, when he is startled at the sound of a gentle knocking on his door. The door is opened, the phial falls from his hand, and in rushes Christiane. The *dénouement* is inevitable; they determine to forget the past, and their lives, hitherto so barren of joy, dawn in brighter colors before them.

The minor machinations of the plot, consisting chiefly of a conspiracy on the part of Goldheimer and an obscure villain, Weikert, to

ruin Wild pecuniarily, as well as Christiane's secret endeavors to frustrate their designs, may be important features as a source of entertainment; but partaking as they do of the conventional and highly melodramatic tone which pervades the whole book, they do not, in our opinion, enhance its literary value.

We should not, indeed, quarrel with Spielhagen for making his hero such an embodiment of gross selfishness, if he had not throughout the novel shown an unaccountable desire to palm him off on the reader as an ideal of manliness. Again, we have looked in vain in *Ultimo* for that fervid improvisation, that self-forgetful art, and that wealth of thought and imagery which made the first works of this author echo in our memory for weeks and months after we had finished the reading of them. Here, on the contrary, the motives of every action are so glaringly and defiantly prominent as almost to invite the critic to question them; the workmanship and structure of the plot so clumsily conventional, and each separate physiognomy so pale and indistinct, when compared with its more vigorous prototype, as almost to make us wish that the famous name on the title-page were a forgery.

If Spielhagen were not a man in the flower of his age (he was born in 1829), we might, indeed, judging by this last performance, be justified in advising him, for his own sake, to rest for a while on his laurels,

.... ne

Peccet ad extremum ridendus, et ilia ducat.

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7. — *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, based on the Doctrine of Evolution, with Criticisms on the Positive Philosophy.* By JOHN FISKE, M. A., LL. B., etc. In two Volumes. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1875. 8vo. Vol. I. pp. xv and 465; Vol. II. pp. vii and 523.

THERE is a comfortable largeness in Mr. Fiske's title which is reassuring in these days when the inevitable limitations of the human mind, and the consequent impossibility of knowing anything, are so constantly thrust in our faces under the name of philosophy. Those modest disclaimers, however, rest, it may be suspected, upon a confusion of thought. We may think as modestly as we please of the extent of our knowledge, but nobody really believes that what is *true* now and here can be false elsewhere or at another time. If the laws of gravitation are true for this earth, they are true for Sirius; and there is no more reason for waiting to try them in Sirius before assenting to